



From Math Zero to Hero



Vincent Chua failed Mathematics for most of his schooling years. But after he accepted Jesus in university, something happened – the yoke was broken! Now enrolled in a PhD programme at the University of Toronto, he has topped his class in Statistics and has become a Teaching Assistant at the PhD level.

I would like to testify that God can do the impossible in our lives. I have never been good in Mathematics. It was common for me to enter the examination hall and forget even the most elementary concepts. **I failed Mathematics in Primary 5, Primary 6, Secondary 2, Secondary 3, and my two years in Junior College.** Because of these setbacks, I developed a deep fear of the subject, accompanied by feelings of inadequacy and poor self-esteem.

My mediocre performance in Math and Science pulled my grades down significantly, so that the only faculty I could enter was the Arts and Social Sciences at the National University of Singapore (NUS). With my A-level grades, I did not qualify for the more prestigious faculties. **I was also poor in English.**

Despite my best efforts, I always got either a C6 or D7 for the General Paper. For the JC1 promotional exams, I had two failures and two conditional passes. For the preliminary exams at JC 2, I had three Ds.

I was grateful, though, for the chance to attend university and decided to work hard. **My second brother Leonard counseled me and urged me to rededicate my life to God so that I would regain meaning in life.** Actually, Math was not my only trouble. There were other things too, but space does not permit me to elaborate. However, God's redemptive plan was soon to follow.

When I came to Trinity in 1997, I was touched by God and felt a strange warmth and peace in my heart. **Within months, God began to heal my mind and fears.** In 1999, God challenged me to take a reputedly difficult statistics course at the Department of Sociology at NUS. I felt led to confront my fears, so I responded in faith. With God's help, I scored a surprising A for that course. This built my confidence, but I still wondered if it happened by pure chance.

But I went on to do well – for the first time in my life. My performance at the University led me to doing an honours degree in Sociology, and then a Masters,

and now a PhD. I am now based at the University of Toronto, in my third year into the Sociology PhD programme.



When I first came to Toronto in August 2005, my knowledge of statistics was rather minimal. The North Americans are known to be sophisticated scientists and I wondered if I could meet their standards. As usual, the intimidations and fears were there. As part of the PhD programme, I was required to take two notoriously difficult statistic courses which involved a variety of complicated methodologies and techniques.

I felt so inadequate. There were times during the semester I would come desperately before God and tell Him I couldn't do it. But God told me to press on, and not lose heart. I continued to apply myself to the projects, not always understanding what was going on, but pushing on nonetheless.

After God broke the mental yoke over my life, I started for the first time to do well in life.

One night, as I was studying, I felt the Spirit of God come upon me and I began to declare prophetically that I would become the next Teaching Assistant

Free From Writer's Block!

Since my teens, I had been active in creative writing. But for a period of five years, I experienced “writer’s block” and had difficulty writing. **It was only after I rededicated my life to Christ in 2005 that the writer’s block disappeared and I started to write poetry again.**

One of my faith goals this year was to publish my first book by the end of the year. It took much audacious fervour to believe God for the impossible. One day, most miraculously, I woke up with the idea of a story fully formed in my head. I wrote the bulk of it in one day.

I submitted the manuscript for an award. The award included a grant that would fully sponsor the publication and printing costs of the winning manuscript. I had almost forgotten about my application until I received an email asking me to go for an interview. During this period, I prayed, and others prayed with me. **God gave me the assurance that He would restore to me what I had lost.** In turn, I promised that I would use my influence as a writer for His glory and for the extension of His kingdom.

Some time later, I received a letter from the organisers to say that I had won the grant to publish my book! And since the printing costs were fully paid for by the very generous grant, the profits from the sales of the book came directly to me.

The profits were also a fulfilment of another promise God had given me last year. At Trinity’s Vision Rally last September, God had impressed upon me to commit a faith promise of \$5000. As a student, I had no idea how I was going to get \$5000, but I put the amount down anyway (that’s why it’s called a faith promise!)

God has restored to me a long-lost and long-cherished dream, and also provided for my faith promise. May His name be greatly praised!

Khoo Lilin, student

(TA) for that difficult PhD statistics course. I declared it again and again, but then quickly felt ashamed of myself for being so misguided and recklessly courageous. God did show Himself to be the God of the impossible. **In both courses, I emerged as one of the top students – scoring A+ for both papers.** God granted me success in my other courses as well. By the time the first year had ended, I had A+ for all my courses. But that was not all. **At the end of that term, I was approached by my professor to be his PhD statistics Teaching Assistant.** What God had inspired me to declare prophetically came to pass!

For a person who used to fail Math repeatedly, I now teach the subject to PhD students at a prestigious North America university. Because of my previous Math troubles, I am especially effective and attuned to understanding and anticipating student needs. God has turned my weakness into strength.

Since coming to Toronto, **I have had the privilege to come under the mentorship of many world-renowned professors – professors whose books and articles I had read from afar, but now am tutored by face-to-face.**

God has turned me from Math Zero to Math Hero. I give Him all the glory.